

**Remarks of Glynn Birch
MADD National President
Thursday, September 29, 2005**

**MADD 25th Anniversary Celebration
MADD/Nationwide Insurance Survey Conducted by Gallup**

Good morning. I am Glynn Birch, the national president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Welcome to our "MADD Celebrates Life" rally and news conference. Today, we are celebrating our 25th anniversary and the more than 300,000 lives we have helped save since our inception. And, we are releasing a new MADD / Nationwide Insurance Survey Conducted by the Gallup public opinion polling firm on Americans' attitudes and behaviors regarding drunk driving.

With us today celebrating our silver anniversary are several people I would like to recognize who have been instrumental in helping to make the organization what it is today.

I am pleased to be joined by several past national presidents of MADD: Beckie Brown, Katherine Prescott, Millie Webb and Wendy Hamilton.

Also with us are several past chairmen of the board: Patti Eichhorn, Joe LoSchiavo and Cindy Roark, along with our new board chairman, Steve O'Toole.

Also, MADD's chief executive officer, Chuck Hurley, who has been a key MADD supporter since its very first days 25 years ago.

And, our longtime friend and supporter, Tim Hoyt, Vice President for Safety of Nationwide Insurance.

And we are very honored to be joined by members of Congress who have helped make the roadways safer for everyone by helping MADD stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and preventing underage drinking.

(**will let you know who is there)
United States Senator Frank Lautenberg, United States Senator Jon Kyl and United States Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard

I want to welcome Band Director, Rodney Chambers and the Dunbar Senior High School band's 20 member drum line which we will hear from at the conclusion of our event.

And finally we are joined by hundreds of drunk driving victims, survivors and activists from all across the country who are in the nation's capital today for visits with members of Congress and to participate in MADD's national conference.

Twenty-five years ago, two heartbroken and determined mothers stood inside our nation's Capitol surrounded by a small group of members of Congress and a large gathering of news media to formally announce the launching of the national MADD movement.

They proclaimed drunk driving to be a "neglected national disgrace" and they called on the nation, its citizens and government at all levels to join together in eliminating the scourge of drunk driving that in 1980 was related to 28,000 deaths and 1 million injuries each year.

Out of the shadows emerged MADD—banded together by victims, survivors and concerned citizens who were driven by grief and the desire to rid the nation's roads of drunk drivers.

Twenty-five years ago, drunk driving was a last socially acceptable form of murder in America. And those pioneers of MADD set out to change that. Putting a face on the statistics, MADD spoke of loved ones, family members and friends. Every death, every injury was given a face, family and history. And their collectively growing chorus said "enough."

It was their strength and determination that took the "hidden horror story" of drunk driving and placed a bright light on it for all to see the devastating aftermath that beset every man, woman and child involved.

Since that time, alcohol-related traffic deaths have declined by 44 percent. More than 21,000 lives have been saved due in the 21 years since the 21 law was enacted.

Every state in the nation has enacted .08 percent BAC as the illegal drunk driving level. A countless number of drunk driving victims have received much-needed support. And a nation continues to be educated on the dangers and consequences of drunk driving and underage drinking.

Twenty-five years later we are gathered on these hallowed grounds not just to look back and remember, but to celebrate—celebrate the more than 300,000 people we have helped save since those two determined women set out to stop the senseless carnage on our roadways and close the door on repeat drunk drivers that inflicted so much needless pain.

And in celebrating, we are also looking ahead to the next 25 years of saving lives. One death, one injury is too many. And MADD is posed to eradicate the senseless and preventable crime of drunk driving. And so is the public.

MADD and Nationwide Insurance commissioned the Gallup organization to take the pulse of the American people on some key questions regarding drinking and driving in America.

The Survey shows there is overwhelming support for high-visibility crackdowns, such as sobriety checkpoints, to rid the roadways of drunk drivers and for tougher penalties for high-risk drunk drivers and enforcement of primary seat belt laws.

Americans know this is a serious issue because almost everyone surveyed mentioned DUI as the worst highway safety problem among a long list of other items.

From a list of nine potential highway safety problems, 94 percent of drivers most frequently mentioned driving under the influence of alcohol as a major highway safety problem followed by drugged driving and aggressive driving.

When respondents were asked what would discourage them from driving after drinking, some of the top factors named were: the possibility of losing their license 89 percent; fear of having their car impounded 85 percent; having an ignition interlock installed in vehicle if caught 81 percent; sobriety checkpoints 80 percent, up from 76 percent in 2000.

Additionally, when those surveyed were given a list of methods to reduce drunk driving the strongest support centered on stronger restrictions for higher-risk drunk drivers, such as vehicle impoundment and ignition interlocks on vehicles, as well as mandatory assessment and treatment, using sobriety checkpoints and requiring all drivers and passengers to wear a seat belt.

Both MADD and the scientific research support all of these as means to reduce alcohol-related traffic fatalities and injuries.

MADD has recognized since its start that sobriety checkpoints are one of the most powerful enforcement tools to deter drunk driving and research backs us up.

Not only do countless studies on the effectiveness of checkpoints point to an average 20 percent reduction in alcohol-related traffic fatalities and injuries, 87 percent of those surveyed in the MADD/Nationwide Insurance Gallup survey support sobriety checkpoints to check for drunk drivers as a method to reduce drunk driving.

Overwhelming public support for checkpoints has continued to increase from 79 percent in 1993 to 83 percent in 2000 to 87 percent in 2005. High-visibility crackdowns, like checkpoints, work because they deter drunk drivers from driving.

In addition, the poll found that nearly 9 in 10 support .08 blood-alcohol concentration as the illegal drunk driving limit in our nation. In fact, with the help of MADD and determined champions on the Hill, federal legislation enacted in the year 2000 prompted all the states to set the illegal drunk driving threshold at .08 percent and as of this year, every state has enacted that illegal limit.

It is estimated 500 lives a year will be saved because of the enforcement of this law.

Without key supporters in Congress, lifesaving anti-drunk driving legislation may never get passed. Today, we are pleased to be joined today by several key members of Congress who have been enormous supporters of MADD and its mission over the years.

MADD is pleased to have Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard join us for this monumental occasion. She is the representative of California's 34th Congressional District.

An advocate for the health and well-being of our nation's youth, the congresswoman is committed to curbing underage drinking. Working with Republican and Democratic members in both the Senate and House, the congresswoman is the House sponsor of "*The STOP Underage Drinking Act*," which uses the National Academy of Science (NAS)'s recommendations to address this national crisis.

To recognize her work against underage drinking, MADD has recognized her efforts and awarded her the Congressional Excellence Award. Please welcome Congresswoman Roybal-Allard to the stage.

Thank you again very much for being here and for your support and leadership.

Congress has been a key partner in bringing the death toll down by 44 percent over the past 25 years. And we all agree that we can and must do better. That is why we are pleased that there is language in the recently enacted highway bill urging the President to appoint a presidential commission to address this public health issue.

We urge the President to heed this call to action, and today we are asking for his support. The last Presidential commission was appointed by Ronald Reagan in 1982, and we believe it is time for a fresh look at the problem in order to eradicate this preventable public health and safety crisis.

The American public clearly understands that driving under the influence of alcohol is a major highway safety problem but, the truth is, people still choose to drink and drive.

The Gallup Survey found that 60 percent of Americans, who drink alcohol on occasion, have operated a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or close to being under the influence of alcohol at some time in their lives. This is up from 57 percent in 2000.

The good news is their friends are looking out for them. The poll found that nearly one in five people said they had in the past week encouraged someone not to drive after drinking too much.

Among this group, three in four, or 77 percent, said they were successful in preventing someone from drinking and driving.

So, it is imperative that everyone make a pledge themselves, and urge their friends, loved ones and co-workers, to never drive after drinking—the safest choice—and we can prevent needless drunk driving crashes from occurring.

While MADD's victim advocates across the country help victims/survivors navigate the choppy waters of courts, community services and emotional healing, companies such as Nationwide Insurance, share our commitment to preventing future drunk driving tragedies.

Nationwide has been on MADD's side for years and we are grateful. This year, our collaboration led to the Gallup poll that measured the American public's attitudes, knowledge and awareness of driving safety issues. We are pleased that Nationwide's Vice President for Safety, Tim Hoyt, is here to discuss the significance of these findings.

(TIM HOYT REMARKS)

Thank you, Tim. Clearly, we have much to celebrate today, but we have much work left to be done. And, with the support of the American people, we are prepared to take the lead in the months and years ahead.

We are pleased to learn from the poll that virtually everyone has heard of MADD and that 9 of 10 people believe that MADD is effective in making the public aware of the dangers of drunk driving. We do not take our good name and credibility for granted.

As we stated earlier, we are almost halfway to our goal to eradicating drunk driving in America.

As our next step, we are today announcing a goal of cutting drunk driving deaths by an additional 25 percent by the end of 2008. This year plan is ambitious but realistic.

At the heart of this plan is a focus on research-based solutions that work: checkpoints, comprehensive plan for high-risk drunk drivers and primary belt laws. And, according to the survey, the public supports these efforts.

To accomplish these goals and ultimately save more lives and prevent more injuries, MADD has developed specific strategies that include:

(1) forming stronger alliances with every level of law enforcement, including police, prosecutors and judges; (2) achieving maximum seat-belt use in our country because we know that buckling up, along with choosing the safest motor vehicles, is our best defense against a drunk driver; (3) supporting the development of technology to prevent drunk driving, such as advanced ignition interlock devices; (4) improving the performance and accountability of the DUI criminal justice system; and (5) and promoting alternative transportation strategies to keep drug and alcohol-impaired persons from getting behind the wheel.

In closing, we may not know how to prevent the natural disasters that have recently ravaged cities along our coastlines, but we do know how to prevent the devastating tragedy of drunk driving. And in preventing impaired driving we must have the political will from our government leaders and the personal involvement of the American people.

The past decade of incremental reductions of one, two or three percent will not get us to our goal. It's time to stop celebrating mediocrity.

Look into the faces of the people here today and you will see a determination to win the war on drunk driving in our lifetimes.

I have dedicated every ounce of myself to this effort in loving memory of my son, Courtney, who at the innocent age of 21 months was killed in front of his grandmother's house by a repeat offender.

Our goal is to not have to meet here in 25 years--an ambitious goal indeed--but one that is attainable because each and every one of us has the power to eradicate this social scourge known as drunk driving.

And in talking about the work that is ahead, I am taken back to the work we have done. There are 300,000 people alive today, due in large part to MADD's efforts.

All across the nation, there are people graduating high school, getting married, having children and grandchildren all because MADD got between them and a would-be drunk driver.

And to help us celebrate those precious lives is Dunbar Senior High School band's drum line led by Mr. Rodney Chambers. We will now pause for a "Moment of Drums" while they play a one minute cadence that represents the heartbeats of the more than 300,000 lives saved.